

Senator the Hon. Winston Peters
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Private Bag 18888
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

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I am writing on behalf of New Zealand's Venezuelan community, to thank you for your clear and firm position regarding the enormous crisis our country is going through. We are extremely concerned about the absence of democratic rules in Venezuela and the loss of its institutions, the continuous violation of its people's human rights, and the increasing deterioration in of their living conditions, which has triggered the unprecedented and massive migration widely reported by the media.

Regarding Venezuela, you said that, "it's not New Zealand's practice to make statements recognising governments", and that is true. But while the international community is wasting time making statements to support unbearable governments, or to condemning US interventionist policies and imperialist aspirations, Maduro's regime is illegally imprisoning and executing innocent people in Venezuela.

According to [Foro Penal](#), a Venezuelan ONG for Human Rights, since January 21st until today, Maduro's repressive regime has illegally arrested 850 demonstrators. They were only asking for freedom, but without any trial or due process, during a TV show Maduro directly condemned them to 20 years of prison under charges of terrorism, violence and hate crimes. Seventy-seven of them are kids aged 12 to 16. Most of them have been uncommunicated since their detention and Foro Penal has registered countless allegations of human rights abuses and torture.

We do know, Minister Peters, that is New Zealand's practice to point out what is wrong (like in the case of Australian off-shore detention centres) or to take the lead after finding out that things can be done much more better (like in the case of immediate action in Climate Change promoted by Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern last week in Davos). These New Zealand's practices make us feel proud and privileged to be part of this country.

In the past, New Zealand has expressed its concern about the highly questionable elections run by Venezuelan authorities under Maduro's regime. The coming days will be crucial, and we hope New Zealand will stand up again with our people and its right to decide their own fate through free and fair elections, following the path courageously undertaken by the Venezuelan National Assembly and its Interim President, Mr. Juan Guaidó.

Yours faithfully,

Maria Ayala

On behalf of the Venezuelan Community of New Zealand